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Second annual report of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Economic and Social Council the second annual report of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, as requested in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2001/7) prepared as a follow-up to Council resolution 2000/29.

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Second annual report of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

Summary

In its second year, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, through its core activities, working groups, and regional nodes, successfully served as a multi-stakeholder mechanism to facilitate and promote collaborative initiatives at the regional, subregional and national levels and to mobilize new public and private resources to support information and communication technologies (ICT)-for-development programmes and projects. The Task Force facilitated the pooling of relevant experience of both developed and developing countries and the sharing of lessons learned in introducing and promoting ICT.

Its ability to leverage extensive networks and to develop new models of collaboration to advance the global effort to bridge the digital divide and foster digital opportunity has established the Task Force as an effective and influential platform to mobilize worldwide support and action to harness the potential of ICT for the objective of attaining the Millennium Development Goals. The Task Force was instrumental in placing development at the centre of the outcomes of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva. It will continue to pursue a focused strategy to build upon its demonstrated success.

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–2	3
II.	The dynamics of the digital divide	3–10	3
III.	Role of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force	11–14	7
IV.	Activities and accomplishments	15–58	7
	A. Building partnerships and networks	16–22	7
	B. Contributing to international dialogue and action on ICT for development	23–30	9
	C. Furthering ICT for development through activities and initiatives of the working groups and regional nodes	31–58	11
V.	Assessment, challenges and the way ahead	59–70	17
VI.	Conclusion	71–73	20

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to the mandate contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/29 of 28 July 2000 on an information and communication technologies task force, in which the Council endorsed the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics contained in the annex to that resolution. By its decision 2001/210 of 13 March 2001 on the establishment of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force, the Council requested the Secretary-General to undertake the necessary steps to establish the Task Force as recommended in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2001/7), paragraph 35 of which states that the Secretary-General will report annually to the Economic and Social Council on the work of the Task Force. The first annual report of the Task Force (E/2003/56 of 28 April 2003) was submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its Substantive Session of 2003. The Council welcomed the achievements of the Task Force, its orientation towards the use of ICT in the advancement of the development goals of the Millennium Declaration, its support of the preparation for the World Summit on the Information Society and its work, including through its regional networks and working groups and regional nodes, on ICT issues.

2. The present report covers the period from December 2002 to February 2004. It provides a brief overview of the environment in which the Task Force operated, presents an outline of its major activities and accomplishments, and gives an assessment of progress made over the second year, as well as an outline of a strategy until the end of 2005.

II. The dynamics of the digital divide[1]

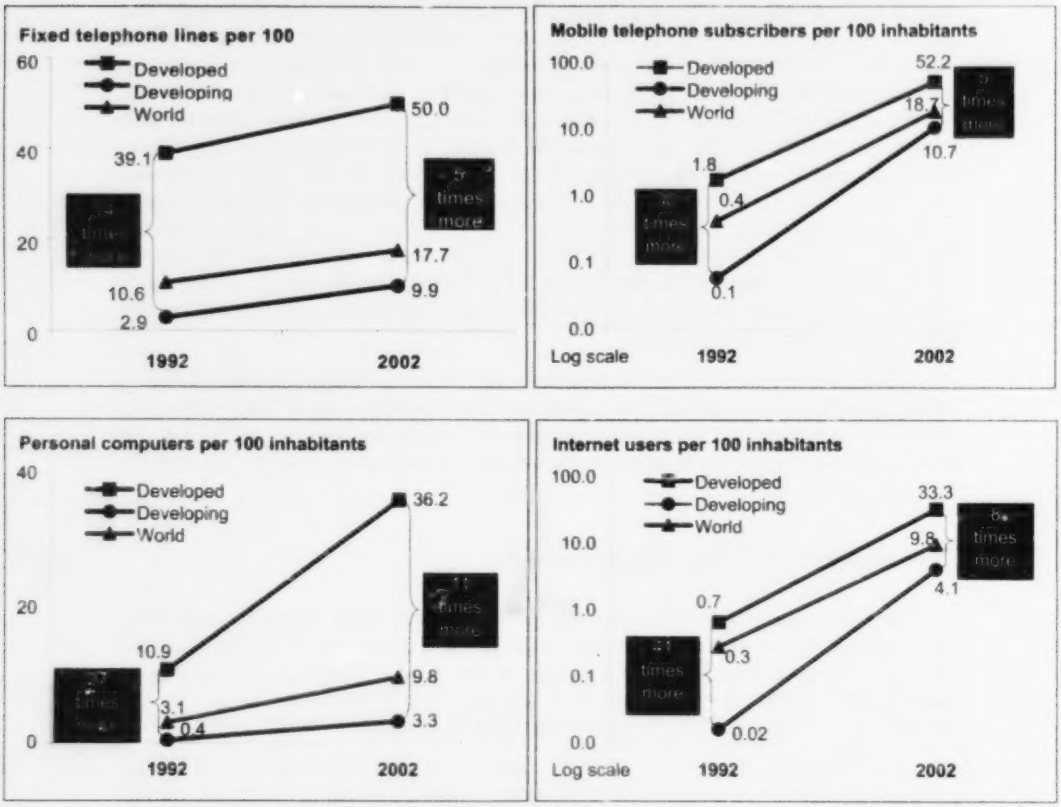
3. In recent years, as information and communication technologies have become the backbone of the global information economy and given rise to the information society, more attention has been focused on the gap in access to ICTs between developed and developing countries. This gap has come to be known as the "digital divide". But how big is it? Is the gap widening or narrowing?

4. One relevant way of measuring the gap in access to ICTs is to look at the differences between developed and developing countries in the level of penetration of different ICT services (telephone, mobile phone, Internet) and of personal computers, over the course of the past decade. As the graphs in figure 1 show, the gap has narrowed markedly, with particularly rapid progress in the field of mobile phone and Internet use.

5. It is notable that the average level of Internet penetration and mobile phone penetration in the developing world in 2002 (4.1 Internet users and 10.7 mobile phones per 100 inhabitants) was equivalent to the level reached in the developed countries around five years earlier. By contrast, the average level of fixed-line penetration in developing countries at the end of 2002 (just under one in every 10 inhabitants) was reached in the developed world as long ago as the 1960s.

Figure 1
The shrinking divide

Distribution of fixed and mobile telephone subscribers, personal computers and Internet users per 100 inhabitants, by economic grouping, 1992 and 2002



Source: *ITU World Telecommunication Development Report 2003: Access Indicators for the Information Society.*

Note: Developed refers to Western Europe, Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and the United States. Developing refers to all other countries.

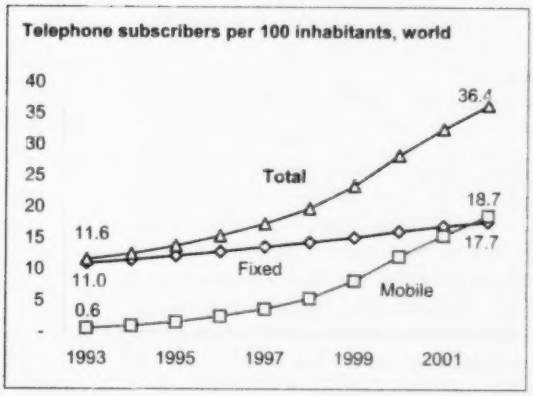
6. What this suggests is that the process of "catch-up" is occurring much more rapidly among newer services than is the case for older ones. But it also suggests that the developing world's strongly expressed preference for mobile phones over fixed-line ones is likely to put the brakes on Internet development in the near future. That is because the vast majority of the world's Internet users still use copper-based fixed-line technologies (e.g., dial-up, Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), cable modems) to access the Internet. Internet access from wireless devices is certainly possible (e.g. through so-called "third generation" mobile phones or through wireless local area networks (LANs)), but it is still quite expensive and, in the case of wireless LANs, has only limited range. These

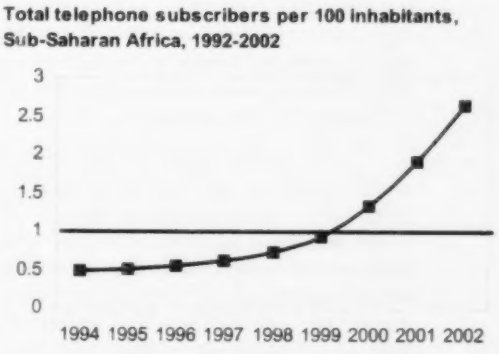
constraints are solvable, but there may well be a period of years during which the further development of the Internet in some developing regions of the world is slowed by the absence of a dense copper-based network.

7. The converging trends in ICTs worldwide have come about in large part owing to changes within the past few years. 2002 was the first year in which the number of mobile phones overtook fixed-lines worldwide (see figure 2, left chart). Africa was the first region where this took place and the impact has been most profound in sub-Saharan Africa. Several countries of the region, including Uganda and the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo, have levels of mobile phone penetration that are up to 10 times higher than fixed-line penetration. As figure 2, right chart, shows, 2000 was a turning point in Africa's telecommunications history as the psychological threshold of one user per 100 inhabitants was crossed. In the first few years of the new century, more Africans have become telecommunication users than in the hundred years of the previous century.

Figure 2
Leaping ahead

Trends in total teledensity, worldwide, 1993-2002 and in sub-Saharan Africa, 1992-2002



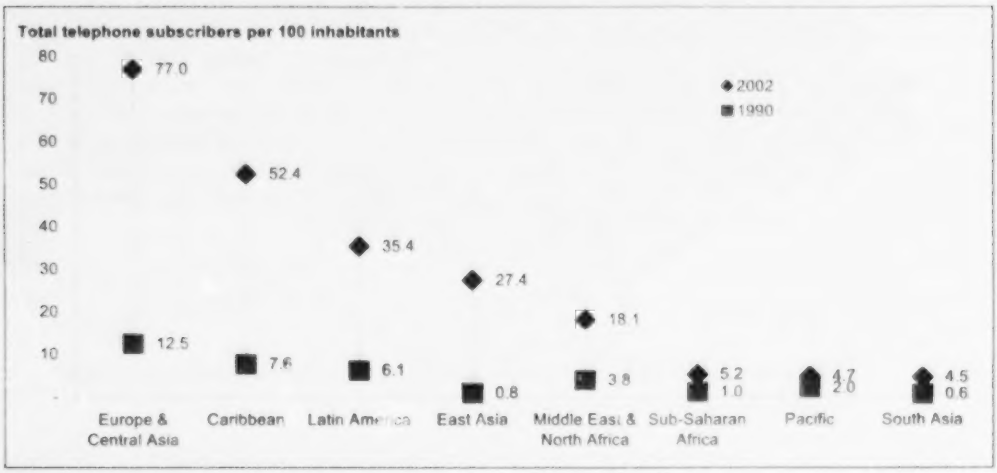


Source: ITU World Telecommunication Indicators Database.
Note: Total teledensity is the combined number of fixed lines and mobile phones per 100 inhabitants.

8. As shown in figure 3, in all of the developing subregions of the world fixed and mobile telephone networks have grown at a faster rate since 1990 than before that date. In the exceptional case of East Asia (which includes China), the total number of fixed and mobile subscribers per 100 inhabitants (i.e. total teledensity) in 2002 was more than 35 times higher than in 1990. In all cases, except in the developing Pacific, total teledensity was at least five times higher in 2002 than it was in 1990.

Figure 3
A decade of ICT progress

Total teledensity (main telephone lines and mobile users per 100 inhabitants), in 1990 and 2002, in developing regions



Source: ITU World Telecommunication Indicators Database.

Note: Developed countries are excluded. For definitions of regions, see: www.worldbank.org/data/countryclass/classgroups.htm.

9. In the 1990s, Africa was the main focus of United Nations system attempts to eradicate poverty and to raise living standards. The problems of that region continue to dominate the development agenda. But there is a danger that other parts of the world may be overlooked. As figure 3 shows, the problems of the digital divide are also evident in South Asia and, especially, among the small island developing States of the Pacific, which have so far failed to benefit from the information age. The Pacific has slipped from fifth place to seventh place in terms of total teledensity. Part of the problem is that, with small domestic markets, the introduction of competing mobile operators has not always been viable. These countries have also suffered from the decrease in settlement payments from international voice traffic that helped them overcome the problems of isolation and lack of economies of scale.

10. The digital divide is shifting, and the focus of development efforts must change with it. The successful conclusion of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003, provides a fresh impetus for international efforts to address the digital divide. Those efforts must concentrate on those areas of the world that are not yet benefiting from growth (such as the Pacific) and on those technologies where the catch-up process is proving slow (principally the fixed-line network). In those areas where the digital divide is already narrowing (such as in East Asia), and where developing countries are already leapfrogging ahead (for instance, in mobile communications) successful policies can be studied and copied.

III. Role of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

11. The Task Force is not an operational, implementing, or funding agency, but provides a platform and focal point for establishing strategic direction, policy coherence and coordination, and advocacy in relation to the global ICT-for-development agenda. It has the mandate to provide overall leadership in the context of the United Nations role in helping to formulate strategies for the development of ICT, putting those technologies at the service of development and forging a strategic partnership between the United Nations system, private industry, financing trusts and foundations, donors, programme countries and other relevant stakeholders. It facilitates connections among interested parties to execute programmes and projects that it wishes to promote and support.

12. Soon after its inauguration, the Task Force adopted a plan of action and a mission statement,[2] built on guidance contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the Ministerial Declaration of the Economic and Social Council of 2000 and the mandate contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2001/7), identifying a set of objectives for the short, medium, and long term. The key areas of action are ICT policy and governance, national and regional e-strategies, human resource development and capacity-building, low-cost connectivity and access, business and entrepreneurship, and resource mobilization.

13. Since its launch, the Task Force has striven for efficiency, accountability transparency, and agility. It has built a global network of working groups and regional nodes as platforms for the implementation of its Plan of Action and for addressing critical elements of the challenge of harnessing the potential of the ICT revolution for development. It has used an open, inclusive and decentralized approach to develop stakeholder campaigns and electronic outreach, utilizing its web site and networks composed of government policy makers and representatives of the private sector, foundations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

14. In January 2004, in the light of the role that the Task Force is playing in the follow-up to the Geneva phase of the World Summit on the Information Society and in the preparation for the Tunis phase (November 2005), the Secretary-General extended the mandate of the Task Force to the end of 2005.

IV. Activities and accomplishments

15. During the second year of its work, the Task Force and its subsidiary bodies welcomed new partners and collaborators, contributed to the ongoing international dialogue, made significant progress on initiatives launched in its inaugural year, and developed new initiatives to capture the benefits of ICT to further development and to support the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals.

A. Building partnerships and networks

16. Partnerships, and the synergies they can produce, are at the core of the Task Force's mandate. The Task Force has sought to build upon and leverage ongoing work by the G8 Digital Opportunity Task Force implementation teams and by other networks, such as the Health InterNetwork. In addition to facilitating productive

collaboration among its members, the Task Force has strengthened close working relationships with its numerous partners, including the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP), Global Knowledge Partnership, the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity, the International Trade Centre, the Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie, the Multilingual Internet Names Consortium, the World Bank and regional development banks, and many other relevant organizations and initiatives.

17. In response to the emphasis placed upon partnership-building at the Geneva phase of the world Summit on the Information Society, UNFIP, a founding member of the Task Force, worked closely with other members to develop partnership projects in 2003. These included the Equal Access/UNDP digital satellite broadcasting initiative; HP's multifaceted e-inclusion initiative, bringing Internet access, literacy training, and microfinance solutions to people at the bottom of the economic pyramid; the Education Development Center's dissemination of the results of its study on power users of technology; and Microsoft's exploration of strategic collaboration opportunities with the United Nations system.

18. Through the digital diaspora networks created by the Task Force and several partners, expatriates working in the high-tech sector in North America and Europe pool their efforts and resources to jump-start ICT initiatives in their home regions of Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. The networks seek to mobilize the entrepreneurial, technological and professional expertise and resources of the various diasporas to promote development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals with the aid of ICT applications. The Digital Diaspora Network for the Caribbean Community was launched in January 2003. The reports *Digital Bridge to Africa* and *Digital Bridge to the Caribbean*, both published in 2003, contain accounts of these networks.

19. In Kampala, Uganda, from 5 to 7 May 2003, UNIFEM, UNDP, the ICT Task Force, UNFIP, and the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, in cooperation with the Republic of Uganda, organized the meeting "Bridging the gender digital divide through strategic partnerships", which was attended by 150 representatives of United Nations organizations, African Governments, NGOs, the African diaspora and the private sector.

20. Building on the foundation of the existing Caribbean network and broadening its geographic scope, the Task Force organized a round table discussion on 5 September 2003 between 130 leaders of the Latin American and Caribbean diasporas on the "Digital bridge to Latin America and the Caribbean" to launch an enlarged digital diaspora initiative.

21. Unveiled jointly by the Task Force, the Governments of Canada and Ireland, and Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) of the United Nations at the World Summit on the Information Society, the Global e-Policy Resource Network (ePol-NET) is a multi-stakeholder partnership designed to mobilize global efforts in support of national e-strategies for development. Consisting of virtual knowledge centres of stakeholders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors around the world, the Network brings together providers of e-strategy and e-policy information and expertise for the benefit of policy and regulatory experts, organizations and Governments in developing countries. The Task Force succeeded in bringing new international partners and regional focus to this initiative, and its African regional

network and Working Groups on ICT Policy and Governance and National and Regional e-Strategies contributed to the project.

22. The Task Force intends to continue its partnership-building work, in particular, at the forthcoming UNCTAD XI conference, to be held in Sao Paulo from 13 to 18 June 2004, at which a number of ICT-for-development partnerships that are being constructed by UNCTAD in close cooperation with Task Force members will be launched.

B. Contributing to international dialogue and action on ICT for development

23. The Task Force sponsored or supported a number of significant international conferences and produced several new publications in the course of 2003 in order to further discussions on the ICT-for-development agenda and to catalyse new initiatives.

24. The New York-based Policy Awareness and Training in Information Technology (PATIT) series, organized by the Task Force and UNITAR, in cooperation with Intel Corporation and the Economic and Social Council's Working Group on Informatics, is intended to provide policy makers and officials from developing and less-developed countries with basic exposure to computers, Internet technologies and related policy issues. In 2003, 127 participants were trained in the five-module certificate programme, and approximately 315 participants attended three high-level seminars. The series will continue in 2004. The Global eLearning programme for senior policy makers in capitals, due to be launched in April 2004 after having been successfully piloted in 2003, will bring PATIT to policy makers around the world.

25. The Task Force co-sponsored the International Council for Caring Communities (ICCC) international conference on facilitating connectivity for older people, "Caring communities for the 21st century: imagining the possible 'age of connectivity'", held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 12 February 2003. Following the conference a publication entitled *The Age of Digital Opportunity: Connecting the Generations* was issued through a collaborative effort by ICCC, the ICT Task Force, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. It presents an assortment of viewpoints on how ICT can help meet the challenges posed by the ageing of the population. A follow-up conference on the theme "Harnessing the generations" was held on 11 February 2004, also at United Nations Headquarters.

26. In response to the Secretary-General's challenge to the Silicon Valley to bring wireless fidelity ("wi-fi" or wireless Internet) applications to the developing world to deliver cheap and fast Internet access, the ICT Task Force joined forces with the Wireless Internet Institute to host "The wireless Internet opportunity for developing countries" on 26 June 2003 in New York. The conference, attended by over 200 participants, including industry practitioners, government regulators, representatives of United Nations organizations, international development experts, academics, non-governmental organizations, and private sector technology experts, provided a productive platform for identifying and addressing the relevant issues. *The Wireless Internet Opportunity for Developing Countries*, published jointly by the ICT Task Force and the Wireless Internet Institute, provides an extensive resource base for

people who want to learn more about the wireless Internet and its possibilities in developing countries. The Wireless Internet Institute has also formulated a follow-up programme to the World Summit on the Information Society, supported by the ICT Task Force and other partners, which will be implemented during 2004 and 2005. It consists of an Arab-world seminar series, an African continent series, a municipal and local authorities series, and a series of regulatory workshops on unlicensed spectrum policy in support of universal access. Each series will be composed of several workshops or meetings leading to the launching of capacity-building programmes and the creation of self-sustaining networks, and will culminate in the presentation of reports to the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis.

27. Taking the first step to implement the mandate contained in General Assembly resolution 57/295 on information and communication technologies for development, the ICT Task Force and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) secretariat jointly organized a brainstorming session on the United Nations system ICT-for-development strategy in Geneva on 24 July 2003. In resolution 57/295 the General Assembly affirmed the need to use information and communication technologies as a strategic tool to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the development programmes and technical cooperation activities of the United Nations system. On the basis of consultation among CEB members and with inputs from the Task Force, a proposal for a system-wide strategy and an accompanying action plan will be elaborated and submitted to the Secretary-General during 2004.

28. The World Summit on the Information Society, occurring in two phases in December 2003 and November 2005, was envisioned as a unique opportunity for world leaders to agree to shape the future information society and to harness the ICT revolution for the effective achievement of internationally agreed development goals by promoting broad agreement to accord high priority to ICT in international development cooperation policies and programmes. Making the Summit process development- rather than technology-oriented, and putting the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, at the heart of the Summit Declaration and the Plan of Action was at the core of the ICT Task Force's persistent efforts during the preparatory process for the Summit. The Task Force helped to generate interest among government and business leaders in participating in the Summit and to ensure that it was perceived as a "cabinet matter" rather than something to be dealt with exclusively by information technology (IT) or telecommunication ministries. It also tapped its extensive network to involve other stakeholders from the private sector and civil society in the preparatory process.

29. The Task Force made a significant substantive contribution to the preparations for the Summit, sponsoring several regional meetings, organizing a series of global forums and side events, participating actively in events organized by other stakeholders and hosting a pavilion at the ICT for Development Platform. *Challenges and Partnerships: Opening up ICT to the World*, a publication prepared for the Summit, demonstrated the vital role of ICTs in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by showcasing some of the major deliverables and initiatives the Task Force and its members are undertaking collectively and individually, and highlighted successful strategies that can be replicated to make the information society a reality.

30. In 2003, two volumes based on the ICT Task Force's policy seminar series for ambassadors and diplomats were issued. *The Role of Information and Communication Technology in Global Development: Analyses and Policy Recommendations* assembles selected outputs from Task Force working groups examining the issues that confront the international community, Governments and local authorities as they seek to utilize ICT to improve people's lives. *Connected for Development. Information Kiosks and Sustainability* explores the preconditions and critical components for the successful use of telecommunications community centres and information kiosks for development, with the intention of sharing ideas and best practices among individuals and organizations endeavouring to provide universal access and services.

C. Furthering ICT for development through activities and initiatives of the working groups and regional nodes

31. Soon after its launch, the Task Force developed mechanisms at the national, regional and subregional levels to facilitate a decentralized approach to cooperation on the basis of the identification of problems and gaps in existing activities related to ICT for development. Five thematic open-ended working groups have since attracted key stakeholders. Regional nodes operate in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab States, and Europe and Central Asia.

ICT policy and governance

32. The objectives of the Working Group on ICT Policy and Governance are to promote transparency, legitimacy and accountability of international governance processes and outcomes related to ICT and to enhance developing countries' participation in ICT policy forums. To this end, the Working Group has renewed efforts on its Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) initiative, aimed at improving developing countries' involvement in both the technical and policy aspects of the work of ICANN by promoting capacity-building and raising awareness about it. As part of this initiative, the Working Group has developed a proposal to support the establishment of Africa's Regional Internet Registry (AfriNIC) that would provide for increased technical capacity as well as greater decision-making power in relation to ICANN for the African region.

33. Recognizing the vital role that e-commerce is increasingly playing in global trade, the Working Group is also spearheading efforts on a World Trade Organization (WTO) initiative aimed at assisting developing countries with e-commerce and ICT issues that may arise in the WTO Doha Development Agenda and other trade negotiations. A report prepared for the Working Group, entitled "WTO and e-Commerce — from the Uruguay Round through the Doha Development Agenda", reviews ways to address the barriers and concerns of specific relevance to developing countries regarding the trade in electronic goods and services, in order to assist them in pursuing trade negotiations to their best interests.

National and regional e-strategies

34. The focus of e-development strategies is to enhance development through effective deployment of ICT by putting in place the conditions necessary to achieve

that end. Drawing on lessons learned from collective experiences in e-development strategies, the Task Force Working Group on National and Regional e-Strategies developed a blueprint for action outlining 10 steps to guide Governments in areas of action and potential collaboration between stakeholders at the global and national levels. This approach is designed to stimulate the deployment of national and regional e-strategies and to create synergies, linkages, cooperation and coordination among the many existing and emerging initiatives on the ground, such as those launched by the World Bank, UNDP, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), ITU and others.

35. The Working Group also supports cooperative efforts, such as the Global e-Policy Resource Network (ePol-NET), to build capacity in the area of e-strategy development by promoting access to e-policy skills, information and expertise. The Working Group promoted and supported the organization of a series of regional meetings on e-strategies between September and November 2003 in Maputo, Mozambique; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and Baku, Azerbaijan to facilitate the sharing of information and experiences on formulating and implementing e-strategies for development, to identify best practices and to initiate partnerships between countries and with development partners in the implementation of e-strategies for development. The meetings also formulated and adopted declarations outlining recommendations and priorities of the countries and regions for presentation at the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva.

Human resources and capacity-building

36. The Working Group on Human Resources Development and Capacity-building is collaborating closely with relevant United Nations agencies and other partners from the private and public sectors, in addition to educators and researchers in both developed and developing countries, to promote the use of ICT for capacity-building and human resource development. The Group has focused on three areas of ICT and technology policy issues: human capacity development, health and content.

37. The first area of focus, relating to human and institutional capacity development, addresses a key priority of the Group: enhancing human capacity development, knowledge creation and sharing through ICTs. The Working Group pays particular attention to overcoming disparities between men and women in educational and training opportunities and achievement. A key initiative of this Group has been the development and implementation of a United Nations Volunteer-led "University Volunteer Network under UNITeS" (United Nations Information Technology Service). The programme provides qualified, experienced volunteers from partner universities on six-month assignments to support ICT capacity-building projects in developing countries. UNITeS has mobilized funds from the Governments of Japan and Germany in support of universities from the South, so that the university volunteers within their own region can contribute their ICT skills to help bridge the digital divide and facilitate South/South cooperation.

38. The Global eSchools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI), launched in December 2003 at the first phase of the World Summit, is a joint project of the Working Group on Human Resource Development and Capacity-building and the Working Group on Low-cost Connectivity and Access. Four founding government members, the Governments of Canada, Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland, and a private sector member, McKinsey & Company, are leading the initiative. GeSCI puts

information and communication technologies to use in support of education in developing countries by working in partnership with local governments, private sector companies and civil society organizations to create — at potentially 10 to 20 per cent of the cost of current approaches — effective end-to-end systems that have all the functions needed to deliver, operate and support the education solutions identified by partners based upon the needs of their students. GeSCI further aims to use the strengthened educational infrastructure for empowering local communities by facilitating their access to global and local information and knowledge flows. This will significantly strengthen communities' capacity to benefit from e-health, e-commerce, e-government, e-democracy and other empowerment tools that ICT can provide.

39. In the Working Group's focus on health, emphasis is placed on supporting the development and application of ICT to strengthen health-care systems and infrastructure to support the United Nations Secretary-General's initiative to combat HIV/AIDS and other infectious and communicable diseases. Working with the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and UNDP, as well as community, state, national and international partners, the Working Group is acting to raise awareness, gain support and foster public-private partnerships to address needs identified at the national and regional levels for scaling up or introducing new initiatives and mechanisms using ICT in management and prevention efforts, research and development, treatment, distribution, monitoring, training and care. Initiatives to raise awareness included the showcasing of successful ICT-for-health programmes at the 2003 World Health Assembly in Geneva.

40. The Working Group's local content subcommittee, Local Voices, actively supports the creation of local content in relation to both education and health to empower the poor and illiterate by making the Internet and ICT relevant to their lives. It is working with software and application developers, the open source community, manufacturers and vendors to provide content and applications important to, and usable in, developing countries. The Group collaborated with representatives of the Executive Secretariat for the World Summit and of the ICT for Development Platform to present a cluster of activities relating to local content and minority languages at the Summit. To ensure follow on, a Local Voices Consortium made up of minority language speakers, businesses, performers, development workers, NGOs and other relevant parties has been set up to disseminate good practice, focus research and development, and prepare an agenda for the second phase of the Summit in Tunis 2005.

41. Other initiatives supported by this Working Group included the development of a portable Knowledge Asset Development System. This initiative is being led by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which has developed an Internet-based Knowledge Asset Development System (KADS) to capture and share knowledge. UNFPA developed an open source version of this tool in collaboration with University College Cork that was successfully launched at the World Summit and is being developed into an enterprise solution to be used freely by organizations.

Low-cost connectivity and access

42. The Working Group on Low-Cost Connectivity and Access aims to raise awareness about, and investigate solutions for, providing increased access and

connectivity to poor people in remote communities at low cost. This includes looking at new technologies for connectivity as well as at innovative business models for sustainable access. The importance of giving priority to the African continent has been reiterated and the aim of supporting the ICT component of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) remains high on this Working Group's agenda.

43. In collaboration with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and Kista IT-University, the Working Group organized an "open access" workshop in Stockholm on 5 and 6 June 2003. The purpose of the workshop was to identify successful solutions and standards for access networks providing open universal access ("first mile"), as well as sustainable business models for operation and maintenance of such networks that could be disseminated as best practices. The workshop will become an annual event.

44. The Working Group published and presented at the World Summit "Local access and connectivity: local solutions", describing examples of innovative technical and business solutions for local access and connectivity in a number of developing countries. The Working Group also contributed to the Summit through the leading role the Group's convener took in planning one of the five main themes of the ICT for Development Platform, "Innovating for equitable access". The Working Group further contributed by supporting an exhibit at the ICT for Development Platform called "The comparative access installation". It also mobilized financial resources to enable civil society organizations, universities and innovators from developing countries to exhibit and thereby contribute to efforts to find sustainable models for establishing access for the "first mile". The Working Group also organized a side event at the platform on "open access", which explored different models for creating sustainable access in remote areas.

45. The Working Group has continued to look into the issue of the feasibility of Internet exchange points and is working with developing countries, ITU and other public and private partners to create a network for raising policy awareness on this issue and for coordinating existing initiatives.

Business enterprise and entrepreneurship

46. Believing that entrepreneurship has the potential to serve as an engine for innovation, job creation and wealth generation, the Working Group on Business Enterprise and Entrepreneurship is engaged in several initiatives that seek to foster entrepreneurship for sustainable social and economic development and poverty alleviation.

47. The first of three programmes that have been pursued by this Working Group is Enablis, a small, medium and microenterprise (SMME) initiative which provides assistance to small and medium-sized businesses in developing countries that use — or intend to use — technology to expand their enterprises. It was originally created by various private sector companies participating in the Digital Opportunity Task (DOT) Force and is now jointly led by Accenture, HP and Telesystem. Enablis works with other enterprise support organizations to provide a holistic set of offerings, including loan financing, business and technical support, and policy advisory services, thereby increasing small and medium-sized enterprises' chances of being successful and sustainable. A South African operating unit was launched in Cape Town in 2003, and future regional hubs are planned.

48. The Working Group's second initiative, the Global Giving Network (formerly the DevelopmentSpace Network), links pre-qualified social entrepreneurs and community-based projects in developing countries to individual donors who wish to make direct philanthropic contributions. The Network is committed to the proposition that civil society and the private sector, working in partnership with indigenous entrepreneurs and community-based organizations, can make a significant contribution to the collective creation of "public goods" and help to alleviate extreme poverty. Typical projects funded include provision of bilingual teachers for indigenous children in Peru, human waste treatment facilities in Mali, restroom facilities for schoolchildren in India and delivery of IT education in Nepal.

49. The objective of the Working Group's third initiative is to create ICT-based solutions that enable greater access to capital for microentrepreneurs and small-to-medium-sized enterprises in the developing world. Structured as a consortium composed of representatives from microfinance NGOs, IT companies and consulting firms, this project aims to connect clients efficiently with microfinance institutions and with capital markets by developing data and data-processing standards in the microfinance industry.

50. *The Arab Regional Network* seeks to coordinate, assist, facilitate, advocate and promote ICT projects for economic and social development in the Arab world. A series of national e-strategies meetings has been planned with a view to contributing to the development of ICT policies and strategies in the Arab countries. In 2003, meetings took place in Jordan and in Lebanon. The June meeting in Beirut, for example, consisted of two days of intensive presentations, debates and consultations between national and international representatives from academia, the public and private sectors, and civil society that produced a set of recommendations, which, once implemented, will provide a coherent framework by which the Government of Lebanon can create an enabling environment and provide adequate infrastructure to give ICTs the opportunity to flourish in the country. A working group for the Arab region has also been established to coordinate and follow up all matters relating to domain names in Arabic, in coordination with various Arab and international institutions and organizations, including the Multilingual Internet Names Consortium (MINC).

51. *The African Stakeholders Network* (ASN) is a network where members from different professional fields share information on major ICT-related activities and initiatives through the ASN discussion list, web sites and country profiles. Coordinated by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), ASN aims to optimize common frameworks for partnership and resource-sharing with existing ICT-for-development networks on the continent by building on current efforts and drawing on the experiences of regional and international institutions, including the Partnership for ICT in Africa (PICTA) and the Information Technology Centre for Africa (ITCA).

52. The annual meeting of the Steering Committee of ASN was convened on 10 and 11 May 2003 in Addis Ababa. The meeting emphasized the importance of the ASN and its Steering Committee delivering the African part of the ICT Task Force Plan of Action; sharing information on major activities and initiatives; sensitizing, involving, and mobilizing major actors; linking up with African and international initiatives and programmes; and attracting funds and investments to the ICT sector in Africa. The ASN and its Steering Committee helped develop substantively the

African contribution to the preparatory process of the World Summit on the Information Society, as well as to the Summit itself. Activities of ASN members were also showcased at the ICT for Development Platform. As part of the preparatory activities for the second phase of the Summit, in Tunis an online consultation process has been launched. The first online forum focuses on Internet governance.

53. *The Asia Regional Node*. The secretariat for the Asia Regional Network was formally established in January 2003 in Shanghai. Hosted by the Regional Cooperation Office for City Informatization of the Municipal Government of the City of Shanghai, the secretariat provides substantive and organizational support for the activities of the ICT Task Force in the region. In particular, the secretariat is organizing the fourth annual Forum on City Informatization in the Asia-Pacific Region originally planned for June 2003 but postponed to June 2004 owing to the SARS epidemic. In conjunction with the Forum, the regional secretariat will organize a meeting on Internet governance that will bring together representatives of Governments of the region, as well as of other stakeholders.

54. *The Latin America and Caribbean Node* (LACNET) focuses on articulating and organizing structures for ICT-for-development initiatives in the region. In June 2003, LACNET organized a workshop with the Presidency of the World Summit on "New models of business: the view of the private sector". The event, attended by high-ranking representatives of the business sector in the region, was aimed at allowing the ICT sector to discuss ways to foster the offering of cheaper hardware and software products for lower income markets. LACNET has also been active in the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative, including in the selection of Bolivia to take part in its first phase. It participated in the formatting of the NetGrowth initiative together with Stanford University, the World Bank and other institutions. The network also contributed to the initial articulation of the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) of ICANN with the objective of creating a regional at-large organization in Latin America. LACNET also articulated a number of regional projects on e-commerce and small and medium-sized enterprises, with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank/Multilateral Investment Fund "ICT4BUS programme".

55. Among activities planned for the coming months are the creation of a regional institute dedicated to research and development and innovation based on intensive use of ICTs, and the planning and execution of a "100 per cent digital island" project in the Caribbean with the aim of demonstrating that, with the adoption of fixed wireless systems, full connectivity is feasible. Possible cooperation schemes have been discussed, with encouraging results, with several private companies and a meeting on Internet governance will be organized for stakeholders in the region, in cooperation with ITU, ICANN, UNESCO and others.

56. *The Europe and Central Asia Regional Network's* Moscow node, in close cooperation with its Geneva node, was actively involved in the organization of the international conference "Partnership networks as tools to enhance information society and knowledge economy" (Moscow, December 2002). This event brought together 100 decision makers and high-level experts from 19 countries representing government, business, civil society, the research and education community, the mass media, national and international associations, and international organizations including the World Bank, UNDP, and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

The conference materials have been broadly disseminated in Commonwealth of Independent States and European countries.

57. The Moscow node actively promotes "knowledge economy" development in Russia and CIS countries. At a conference held in Vilnius, Lithuania, in August 2003, members of the node presented a report on main indicators for a knowledge economy readiness assessment, which could form a basis for a system of indicators for preparing national knowledge economy reports for Europe and Central Asia.

58. As the working groups and regional nodes continue to develop and carry out their activities, the Task Force places great value on synthesizing and evaluating the results to draw out best practices and lessons learned and to ensure close alignment of the activities of the working groups and regional nodes with the Millennium Development Goals.

V. Assessment, challenges and the way ahead

59. Review of the Task Force's activities during the past two years proves its utility and shows both the potential and limitations of such a mechanism. Although it is constrained by limited resources and its dependency on sovereign Governments actively cooperating and taking ultimate responsibility for their national ICT and development environments, the ICT Task Force has clearly demonstrated its ability to contribute to the development agenda, to build capacity among policy makers to participate actively in discussion on ICTs, to identify gaps in programmes or projects as well as opportunities for synergy among interested parties, and to stimulate action or coordinate collaboration as appropriate. It has helped develop new models of leadership and collaboration to advance the global effort to bridge the digital divide and foster digital opportunity. In effect, the body has created the organizational infrastructure for using ICTs to address the eradication of endemic poverty and to create new opportunities for people around the world. Developing countries, in particular African countries and least developed countries, remain the major focus of its efforts.

60. The challenges that the Task Force faces are known. The global environment is extremely dynamic and complex, requiring an ability to respond effectively to change. Financial resources are only slowly becoming available again after a significant contraction. Ultimately, the future success of ICT for development depends on the commitment of Governments to good governance, the protection of human rights, sound economic policies and the fight against corruption and for the rule of law, as well as the creation of a conducive and productive policy and institutional environment for investment in ICT for development. The effectiveness of the Task Force in reaching its goals is also contingent on the sustained involvement of key institutions and the actors engaged in its work. Bridging the digital divide and providing access for all are at the heart of the ICT-for-development agenda and involve complex issues such as infrastructure, technological innovation, investment, education and training, and content creation. The integration of ICT policy and strategy with the overall national development strategy is crucial in this regard.

61. Members of the Task Force and its Bureau reviewed and assessed the experience acquired and the lessons learned during 2003. On the basis of these assessments, a business plan for 2004 was developed to focus Task Force activities.

The plan stresses that activities must realistically reflect the Task Force's capacity. The Task Force, therefore, should concentrate on those activities in which it has a proven record of achievement — specifically, linking ICT and internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration; building multi-stakeholder partnerships; addressing ICT policy and governance; and contributing to the creation of an enabling environment — rather than expanding into any qualitatively new field of activity.

62. In this context, five priority activity tracks on which to focus the ICT Task Force's efforts have been identified in the business plan.

Monitoring and benchmarking progress on the World Summit on the Information Society implementation

63. The ICT Task Force has a vital role in the period between the two phases of the World Summit. The multi-stakeholder character of the Task Force, with its active global system of subsidiary bodies and networks, position it uniquely for supporting the critical follow-up to the Summit decisions. Its potential to add value is greatly facilitated by the extension of its mandate until December 2005. The Task Force is already implementing, in accordance with the mandate and Plan of Action, a number of activities that may be relevant to the inter-phase work that the World Summit may decide to undertake, including facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships and capacity-building in ICT for development.

64. Led by Industry Canada, the Task Force's work in developing a system of indicators and benchmarks that would provide a basis for assessing the impact of ICT on the achievement of internationally agreed development goals builds on efforts being pursued by the World Economic Forum, the World Bank and UNDP, and by the Secretary-General's Millennium Project Task Force 10 on Science, Technology and Innovation, with which the Task Force has been working closely. The Task Force presented a working document, "Tools for development: using information and communications technology to achieve the Millennium Development Goals", at its 5th meeting and in ICT for Development Platform workshops at the World Summit in Geneva. A more analytical piece is planned for 2004 on the ICT-for-development agenda, in addition to a collection of examples, success stories and case studies that will illustrate the role of ICTs in meeting the development challenge.

Promoting a dialogue on Internet governance and other policy issues

65. The Task Force is actively contributing on the key issues emerging from the Geneva phase of the World Summit, in particular the issues relating to Internet governance. Building on its recognized strengths, the Task Force has continued to work on this topic by, among other things, providing its multi-stakeholder platform to bring relevant actors together in a productive dialogue on Internet governance and other policy issues created by the IT revolution. This work builds on its activities in the areas of ICT policy and governance, and e-strategies. The objective is for the Task Force to contribute to the larger international debate on this crucial set of issues, with a view to helping develop a solid foundation for a meaningful consensual debate and thus contributing to the World Summit process.

Supporting an enabling environment

66. The recent first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva endorsed the decisive role of an enabling environment in the propagation of ICTs and their consequent impact on development. The ICT Task Force works with other stakeholders to facilitate the identification of best practices, which constitute the road map towards favourable conditions for information society development. In collaboration with various partners, including from the private sector, the Task Force will promote capacity-building in ICT policy-making in developing countries and countries with economies in transition through building activities complementary to those to be supported in the period 2004-2006 through the Development Account project that will be led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations. The Task Force will support the establishment of networks of policy makers and practitioners and facilitate online training.

Ongoing activities

67. In its third and fourth years of operation, the ICT Task Force will strive to bring its initiatives to scale where possible. It is planned to implement the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative launched at the World Summit in a first group of countries (India, Bolivia, Ghana and Namibia) in 2004, with the support of a dedicated secretariat in Dublin, Ireland. It is expected that the initiative will be implemented in a second group of countries in 2006. The Task Force will continue to play a role in directing policy and linking the initiative to other activities and actors to ensure coherence.

68. The Task Force will be a vital partner to CEB in developing an ICT strategy for the United Nations system, as plans to develop approaches for a broad coherent and effective strategy proceed. The series on Policy Awareness and Training in Information Technology will continue in 2004 and will offer its global e-learning programme for senior policy makers in capitals beginning in April. The Wireless Internet Institute's ambitious World Summit programme including a training component, supported by the ICT Task Force and other partners, will unfold throughout 2004 and 2005. The Task Force will encourage the digital diaspora networks to build upon their efforts to develop and implement tangible initiatives to capture and focus the desire and determination of the Latin American, Caribbean and African diasporas to make positive contributions to their home regions.

Strengthening supporting activities

69. The basis of the ICT Task Force's effectiveness is its ability to bring influential stakeholders together to address common concerns. In order to attract the relevant players, its activities must be properly promoted and disseminated to reach the appropriate audiences. The Task Force has undertaken significant efforts to raise awareness and mobilize support for the ICT-for-development agenda and to contact civil society by organizing conferences and workshops, producing publications and placing articles in journals. The Task Force has also promoted its work at major international events, including most recently the World Summit on the Information Society, and intends to continue to do so. Nevertheless, the promotion and outreach activities could be reinvigorated with enhanced commitment from stakeholders.

70. Fund-raising is directly affected by the effectiveness of the Task Force's promotion and outreach. In order to ensure successful implementation of the

mandate, Plan of Action and decisions taken by the meetings of the Task Force, as well as effective secretarial support to Task Force activities and events, it is imperative to ensure a stable, sustainable and predictable resource base. The Task Force is evaluating the feasibility of adding a full-time development officer to the secretariat to provide a systematic and effective outreach and fund-raising effort.

VI. Conclusion

71. **A new paradigm of global society is evolving that is based on networking in pursuit of common interests and on the emergence of non-hierarchical, multilateral, and multi-stakeholder approaches. ICTs are the nerve system of this new paradigm. They are used to link the external environment and the functioning of internal systems, to transfer impulses for action and to provide feedback. The recent WSIS declared the need to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society.**

72. **However, at present the full potential of ICT in servicing and driving the new paradigm is far from being adequately harnessed. It needs to be utilized much more efficiently and fully to promote development. The ICT Task Force, by creating a worldwide network of stakeholders in ICT for development, is well positioned to contribute to making the new global paradigm work for development.**

73. **The networks, partnerships and initiatives incubated by the Task Force have helped create a new momentum towards greater use of ICT for achieving the internationally agreed development goals. The Task Force is also well placed to contribute to the follow-up to the Geneva phase and preparations for the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. The implementation of the World Summit Programme of Action and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals will, however, require sustained and long-term efforts. The Task Force embodies the idea of working together in creative and innovative ways. The challenge will be to build on this successful model for sustained results over the medium to long term.**

Notes

[1] This section has been contributed by the International Telecommunication Unit.

[2] See the web site of the Task Force http://www.unicttaskforce.org for these documents.

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Products harmful to health and the environment

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 39/229, in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three years through the Economic and Social Council on products harmful to health and the environment, including the publication of the Consolidated List of Products Whose Consumption and/or Sale have been Banned, Withdrawn, Severely Restricted or Not Approved by Governments. The List, containing restrictive regulatory decisions on chemicals and pharmaceuticals, is prepared in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization, as part of an effort to disseminate information internationally on products harmful to health and the environment.

The report provides an overview of activities undertaken by United Nations system organizations and other major developments in the area of environmentally sound management of chemicals since the previous triennial review in 2001. It also contains recommendations for consideration by the Economic and Social Council.

* A/59/50 and Corr.1.
** E/59/100.

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Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–3	3
II.	Review of the Consolidated List	4–17	3
	A. Format, scope and content	4–12	3
	B. Utilization, dissemination and computer access	13–17	6
III.	Developments since the previous triennial report	18–44	7
	A. United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related cooperation mechanisms and chemical conventions	18–39	7
	1. Inter-organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals	20–21	8
	2. Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety	22–26	8
	3. Persistent organic pollutants (Stockholm Convention)	27–31	10
	4. Prior informed consent (Rotterdam Convention)	32–36	11
	5. Strategic approach to international chemical management	37–39	12
	B. Other developments	40–44	13
IV.	Future trends and emerging issues	45–48	14
V.	Conclusions and recommendations	49–54	15

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 37/137 of 17 December 1982, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a Consolidated List of Products Whose Consumption and/or Sale Have Been Banned, Withdrawn, Severely Restricted or Not Approved by Governments[1] on the basis of the work already being undertaken within the United Nations system. In its resolution 39/229 of 18 December 1984, the Assembly decided, inter alia, that an updated Consolidated List should be issued annually and that the data should be made available to Governments and other users through direct computer access to it. In accordance with this decision, the format of the List has been kept under continued review, in cooperation with the relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, with a view to its improvement, taking into account its complementary nature, the experience obtained and the views expressed by Governments. In accordance with the same resolution, the Secretary-General was requested to inform the Assembly at its forty-first session and every three years thereafter, through the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the aforementioned resolutions.

2. In compliance with the most recent Economic and Social Council resolution (2001/33) on the List, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to look into the possibility of using online dissemination data in the List, a special effort was made, in addition to preparing it for printing, to make the next scheduled issue available online. The eighth issue was posted on the Council web site in September 2003 on a trial basis. Since then, two more issues of the List have been posted, while the feasibility of providing online access to a sales publication are being discussed.

3. The present report, covering the seventh triennial review of the Consolidated List, is prepared in compliance with the aforementioned resolution and other resolutions of the General Assembly (38/149, 44/226) and the Economic and Social Council (1998/41). It provides an overview of major recent developments, reported by organizations of the United Nations system, regarding products which are harmful to human health and the environment and makes proposals on the possible impact of these developments on the format, content and coverage of the List. The report also describes recent adjustments in the production schedule and distribution pattern of the List. It includes the developments which are active in the sound management of chemicals.

II. Review of the Consolidated List

A. Format, scope and content

4. Continuous review of the format and content of the Consolidated List have made it possible to expand its coverage and scope. While the List, in line with General Assembly resolution 37/137, has remained easy to read and understand, the number of products listed and the number of Governments reporting have regularly increased with each new issue. Thus, the first issue of the List covered less than 500 products regulated by 60 Governments. The two most recent issues (ninth and tenth) put together would cover approximately 1,100 chemical and pharmaceutical products regulated by 113 Governments.

5. The scope of information contained in the List has remained essentially the same over the years. The List is divided in two parts. Part I, compiled by the United Nations, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), contains the text of restrictive regulatory decisions taken by competent national authorities on both pharmaceutical (monocomponents and combinations) and chemical (agricultural and industrial) products. Consumer products have been included only when they are hazardous because of their chemical composition. Psychotropic and narcotic substances, covered by international conventions, are included only in cases where a country has notified WHO either that the substance is controlled more rigorously than is provided for under the relevant international conventions, or that the substance has been subjected to national control before being considered for international scheduling. The List does not include many widely used industrial chemicals to which occupational exposure limits have been assigned by national authorities. Information on these products is available in publications of the International Labour Organization (ILO).[2] Similarly, relevant information on food additives, which fall outside the scope of the List, is considered by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission.[3] The regulatory information also includes references to the relevant legal and statutory documents in order to enable the user to ascertain the legal context and scope of the regulations. There are, in addition, bibliographic references to scientific and technical studies by international organizations relating to chemical products. In addition, the List includes an alphabetical and classified listing of products and three indexes: scientific and common names, trade/brand names and Chemical Abstract Service Registry numbers.

6. WHO regularly provides explanatory comments regarding information on related national regulatory actions taken on almost all pharmaceutical products. These comments contain useful information reflecting the position of Governments on their regulatory actions in the light of different national priorities, thus providing context for these actions. UNEP and the International Programme on Chemical Safety, however, are not able to provide similar comments on regulatory actions related to chemicals, because of the large number of products in which these chemicals appear and the many applications of such products. Nevertheless, in the case of pesticides and chemicals covered under the Rotterdam Convention, decision guidance documents, prepared by the Convention secretariat, provide detailed information, including summaries of risk and benefits and reasons for regulatory action.

7. Part II of the Consolidated List contains commercial information relating to a large proportion of the products included in part I. The commercial data is compiled by the United Nations Secretariat from publicly available sources and includes information on the manufacturers of these products and their generic and, if available, proprietary trade names, under which these products are marketed worldwide. Only the name and location of the parent company is included in the List, even when the actual producer is a subsidiary located in another country. An effort is made to verify collected commercial data with the respective manufacturer before printing the List.

8. Recognizing that all pharmaceutical and chemical products are potentially harmful if not correctly used, it is worthwhile to highlight a number of considerations that may affect the contents of the Consolidated List, such as:

(i) decisions taken by a limited number of Governments on a specific product may not be representative of the policy position of other Governments, particularly in view of differing risk/benefit considerations; (ii) the fact that a given product is not listed as regulated by a country does not necessarily mean that its use is permitted in that country; rather, it may mean that the relevant regulatory decision to prohibit its use has not yet been communicated to the United Nations, WHO or UNEP; and (iii) in the case of pharmaceuticals and pesticides, which are frequently subject to compulsory registration procedures, the product may not have been submitted for registration.

9. As mentioned earlier, information included in the List on pharmaceutical products is provided by WHO, which collects and disseminates it through various exchange mechanisms, among them: (i) the international drug monitoring programme, which collaborates in monitoring suspected adverse drug reactions with the aim of identifying, at the earliest possible moment, the liability of a drug to produce undesirable effects which were not detected during its clinical trials; (ii) the WHO certification scheme on the quality of pharmaceutical products moving in international commerce through which the exporting country is required to certify, on request, the quality control standard drugs. In the case of a product not authorized for sales or distribution in the exporting country, the reasons are explicitly stated and, when relevant, grounds for refusal are disclosed; (iii) WHO drug information circulars contain information received from Member States on the safety and efficacy of drugs, which include any decision to prohibit or limit the availability of a drug already in use, any decision to refuse the approval of a new drug and any approval when accompanied by restrictive provisions.

10. Information on a considerable number of chemical products and related data included in the Consolidated List has been provided by UNEP and originates from a variety of sources, especially the legal file of the International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals and submissions made under the original voluntary prior informed consent (PIC) procedure. In 1995, however, UNEP ceased updating the legal file. In 1998, when the original voluntary PIC procedure was superseded by the interim PIC procedure — operated in accordance with the provisions of the Rotterdam Convention — it became apparent that virtually all the notifications of bans or severe restrictions previously submitted under the original procedure did not meet the new information requirements, as set out in annex I to the legally binding Rotterdam Convention. Consequently, the Convention secretariat only considers as valid those notifications of bans or severe restrictions that meet the requirements of the Convention. Notwithstanding that the number of products covered under the Convention is still rather limited, it would be useful to continue to provide information on identified restricted products through the List until the process under the Rotterdam Convention can review and take a decision on the inclusion of many of these products.

11. In connection with the asymmetry between the small number of chemical products currently covered under the chemical conventions (Rotterdam, 37; Stockholm, 12) and the large number of chemical products that are included in the Consolidated List (over 500), it is worthwhile to mention that it will take longer to add new products under the Conventions, with their legally binding mandates, their focus on specific products and their strict criteria for the inclusion of new products, including detailed documentation. However, the List is an instrument mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/137 and other resolutions, with the

primary responsibility of disseminating information available within the United Nations system on products harmful to health and the environment on which regulatory actions have been taken by Governments, to as wide an audience as possible.

12. It is also important to note that summaries of notification of regulatory action received by the Rotterdam Convention secretariat, if not satisfying all elements of the criteria specified in annex I to the Convention, are not published; only limited information is circulated. Irrespective of the decision of the Convention secretariat, these notifications are deemed to be valid within respective issuing countries and thus qualified to be included in the List.

B. Utilization, dissemination and computer access

13. Close attention has been paid to having the Consolidated List published as laid down in General Assembly resolutions 39/229 and 44/226. Dividing the list into two separate issues — one for pharmaceuticals and the other for chemicals — has not only aided in the handling of large and growing databases, but has also made it possible to print the number of copies according to the need of each group of users, respectively, thereby facilitating the distribution of the publication to a more focused group of users every year.

14. The List continues to present, in a unified manner, information on restrictive regulatory decisions taken by Governments on a range of pharmaceutical and chemical products. As such, it is a recognized source of valuable information for Governments in ensuring access to information that may be useful in taking appropriate regulatory measures for the use of pharmaceutical and chemical products in the light of their particular national circumstances. Furthermore, the provision of information on trade names, under which these products are marketed, adds value to the List and makes it easier for national authorities and others monitoring such activities to identify a restricted product available in the local market. The identification of the product with its manufacturer also provides access to safety data sheets and other information available from the manufacturer. In addition, commercial data provides an easy method to cross-reference trade names with recognized common scientific names under which most regulatory information is available. Other users of the List include intergovernmental organizations, academic institutions, concerned non-governmental organizations, the media and other members of civil society. The List has thus proved to be an important tool for public interest and consumer groups in bringing to the attention of Governments and manufacturers the need to remove hazardous products from the marketplace and in raising awareness among public officials and non-governmental organizations on the health-related effects of using certain products.

15. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 39/229, which calls for the List data to be made available to Governments and other users in such a form as to permit direct computer access to it, information contained in the List was transferred to diskettes on an experimental basis. The Secretariat continued to work on the feasibility of producing the List data on diskettes/CD-ROMs, with search facilities, and to make them available as sales items in addition to the printed text. In compliance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/33, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to look into the possibility of online

dissemination of the List, the eighth issue of the List, containing complete historical data on pharmaceuticals, became the first issue to be printed as well as posted on the Council web site under publications in September 2003, on a trial basis.

16. Since September 2003, the ninth and tenth issues of the List, containing, respectively, the most recent available data on chemicals and pharmaceuticals, had been posted on the Internet and, at the same time, a short version of each had been published. These versions contain only new and updated information since the publication of the respective previous issues. The short version is printed for the benefit of those users of the List, particularly in the developing countries, who may not have easy access to the Internet, or those who would like to continue to receive the publication in the printed version for reasons of their own. It is recommended that the short version be used in conjunction with the most recent printed version of the List containing complete historical data. In view of the List being a sales publication, consultations are under way on whether to develop a subscription scheme or to provide free of charge Internet access on a permanent basis to the List's database.

17. Starting with the second issue of the Consolidated List, a questionnaire has been included in the List for the purpose of assisting the Secretariat to determine the use to which the List is being put. The List continues to play an important role in facilitating information and decision-making on products which are restricted in some countries but still available in others.

III. Developments since the previous triennial report

A. United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related cooperation mechanisms and chemical conventions

18. Ever since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development,[4] chapter 19 of Agenda 21 has reflected the preoccupation and the work of the organizations of the United Nations system in the area of environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals. The current work on the issue of products harmful to health and the environment is based mostly on the principles indicated in chapter 19, which encouraged increased national and international efforts for intensive international work and designated the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS)[5] as the nucleus for international cooperation. IPCS was set up jointly by UNEP, WHO and ILO in 1980 to establish risk assessment for the safe use of chemicals and for technical cooperation in chemical safety. Furthermore, chapter 19 stated the need for increased coordination of United Nations bodies and other international organizations involved in chemicals assessment and management. This led to the establishment of two new coordination mechanisms for strengthening coordination at the international level (see paras. 20-21 and 22-26 below).

19. In September 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development[6] adopted the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, which reflects renewed commitments to the sound management of chemicals and includes some new commitments and targets. For example: (i) the aim to achieve, by 2020, the use and production of chemicals in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment; (ii) the development, by 2005, of a strategic approach to international chemicals management; (iii) national implementation of

the new globally harmonized system of classification and labelling of chemicals fully operational by 2008; (iv) the entry into force of the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions by 2003 and 2004, respectively; (v) development of coherent and integrated information on chemicals, such as through national pollutant release and transfer registers; (vi) reduction of risks posed by heavy metals; and (vii) issues related to hazardous waste. The World Summit provided a fresh impetus to the ongoing work of the relevant United Nations system organizations and concerned intergovernmental processes in the environmentally sound management of chemicals. A brief summary of activities undertaken by some of these mechanisms since the previous report of the Secretary-General is described below.

1. Inter-organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals

20. The Inter-organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC)[7] has been designed to serve as a mechanism for coordinating efforts of intergovernmental organizations in the assessment and management of chemicals. There are seven participating organizations: UNEP, ILO, WHO, FAO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The Inter-organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals provides a forum to these organizations to collaborate as partners in promoting international work related to the environmentally sound management of chemicals, within the framework of their own respective mandates. IPCS carries out a number of chemical safety-related activities as a contribution to IOMC.

21. The Inter-organization Coordinating Committee brings together representatives of the participating organizations of IOMC for consultations on the planning, programming, implementation and monitoring of their activities. The Coordinating Committee prepares and periodically updates an inventory of the chemical safety activities of the participating organizations. The Committee has established coordinating groups which provide a means for interested organizations working in these areas to discuss ways and means of ensuring that their activities are mutually supportive, to monitor progress and to identify issues of concern. These coordinating groups have dealt with issues of the harmonization of chemical classification systems; chemical information exchange; pollutant release and transfer registers; assessment of existing chemicals; chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response; and identification and management of obsolete stockpiles of pesticides and other chemicals. The Committee has direct responsibility for the coordination of the capacity-building activities of the participating organizations.

2. Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety

22. The International Conference on Chemical Safety established in 1994 the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS),[8] which is an international mechanism for cooperation in chemical safety. The Forum brings together public and private stakeholders, including Governments, intergovernmental bodies, non-governmental organizations and other representatives of civil society in efforts to arrive at policy guidance and strategies to build partnerships and enhance coordination in the promotion of chemical safety. The Forum, a non-institutional organization, has held, since its inception, four sessions. Between sessions of the

Forum, a Standing Committee provides, inter alia, initial input on significant new issues to be considered by the Forum, as well as advice and assistance with regional efforts and monitoring of progress.

23. At its first session, in 1994, the Forum adopted priorities for action for the effective implementation of the programme areas set out in chapter 19 of Agenda 21. The recommendations contained in the priorities for action were addressed to Governments and also provided guidance to international bodies for the development of tools for use by Governments in meeting their national targets. At the second session, held in Ottawa in February 1997, the Forum reviewed activities carried out since the first session and provided further recommendations to the General Assembly at its special session in 1997 for the review of progress in the implementation of Agenda 21. Considerable progress was reported in achieving the targets included in chapter 19.

24. At its third session, held in Brazil in October 2000, the Forum reviewed progress on the follow-up of the programme of action and previously set targets. Substantive progress was reported in meeting most of the targets. The Forum adopted the Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action beyond 2000, which were addressed to Governments, international organizations, industry, labour unions and public interest groups and included an update of objectives in established areas, as well as targets set in several new areas. All partners of the Forum were called upon to participate actively in realizing the Priorities within a defined time frame.

25. The fourth session of the Forum was held in Bangkok from 1 to 7 November 2003, under the theme "chemical safety in a vulnerable world". The Forum took stock of the progress achieved on the commitments and recommendations made at the previous sessions. It focused on the following topics:

(a) *Children and chemical safety*. The Forum identified the need to consider chemical exposures that occur during preconception and, throughout gestation, infancy, childhood and adolescence. It recommended that Governments prepare, through multistakeholder consultations, initial national assessments of children's environmental health and chemical safety, promoting education and training on children's chemical safety and commit to taking action to prevent or reduce exposure, and requested WHO to convene a meeting to explore mechanisms for collecting data and disseminating information that could be used to reduce uncertainty in risk assessments;

(b) *Occupational safety and health*. The Forum urged ILO, WHO and FAO to strengthen their collaboration in occupational safety and made specific recommendations in each of the following five areas of concern, which correspond to programme areas of chapter 19 of Agenda 21, namely, assessment of chemical risks, harmonization of chemical classification and labelling, information exchange, risk reduction programmes and capacity-building;

(c) *Generation and availability of hazard data*. The Forum stated that for all commercial chemicals, appropriate hazard information should be made available to the public and other information should be accessible according to a balance between the public's right to know and the need to protect valid confidential business information. It encouraged Governments to establish national priorities for information generation on chemicals not produced in high volume and to promote the timely generation of hazard data;

(d) *Acutely toxic pesticides — risk management and reduction.* The Forum recommended that Governments take actions to reduce pesticide poisoning incidents, including implementation of relevant agreements, prioritize pest management in national development strategies, promote integrated pest management, substitute acutely toxic pesticides with safer alternatives, ensure appropriate labelling, avoid the build-up of obsolete pesticide stocks and establish or enhance national systems of surveillance and reporting on poisonings;

(e) *Capacity-building.* In the area of capacity-building assistance, the Forum asked all participants to take full advantage of existing funding opportunities, strengthen bilateral capacity-building efforts, ensure adequate capacity for the sound management of chemicals, disseminate success stories and integrate chemical management into their environmental management programmes. In connection with capacity-building, the Forum also addressed the wide gap that exists between developed and developing countries in their ability to pursue chemical safety policies. It decided to establish an ad hoc expert group with the mandate to propose a systematic way to strengthen the sound management of chemicals in countries with an expressed need for such assistance.

26. The Forum also passed resolutions and made recommendations on (i) a globally harmonized system for the classification and labelling of chemicals; (ii) the prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products; and (iii) a strategic approach to international chemicals management. The fifth session of the Forum will be held in Hungary in the second half of 2005 or early 2006.

3. Persistent organic pollutants (Stockholm Convention)

27. Persistent organic pollutants (POPs),[9] a certain category of chemicals, attracted international attention in the 1960s and 1970s owing to evidence that exposure to very low doses can lead to cancer, damage to the nervous system, diseases of the immune system, reproductive disorders and interference with infant and child development. These chemical substances persist and bioaccumulate and pose a risk to human health and the environment. With further evidence of the long-range transport of these substances to regions where they have never been used or produced and the consequent threat they pose, there was an urgent need for global action to reduce and eliminate their release into the environment.

28. In 1995, the UNEP Governing Council invited IOMC, IFCS and IPCS to initiate an assessment process regarding an initial list of 12 POPs.[10] IFCS convened a working group to develop a work plan for assessing available information on them. The working group concluded that sufficient information existed to demonstrate the need for international action to minimize the risks from the 12 POPs, including a global legally binding instrument, and forwarded its recommendations to the UNEP Governing Council and the World Health Assembly. In 1997, the Governing Council, endorsing these conclusions and recommendations, requested that UNEP, together with the relevant international organizations, prepare for and convene an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee with a mandate to develop, by the end of 2000, an international legally binding instrument for implementing international action, beginning with the 12 specified POPs.

29. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee held five sessions between June 1998 and December 2000 to conclude negotiations on the convention. The Conference of the Plenipotentiaries convened in Stockholm, from 22 and 23 May

2001 to adopt the International Legally Binding Instrument for Implementing International Action on Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants (the Stockholm Convention), which was signed by 91 Governments and the European Commission. The Convention required 50 ratifications and a 90-day waiting period to come into force. After receiving the fiftieth instrument of ratification from France, on 17 February 2004, the Convention entered into force on 17 May 2004.

30. The treaty calls for international action on 12 POPs grouped into three categories of pesticides, industrial chemicals and unintended by-products. Governments were asked to promote the best available techniques and environmental practices for replacing existing POPs, while preventing the development of new ones. Criteria and procedures have been developed to identify additional POPs. Other key elements of the treaty include: the requirement that developed countries provide new and additional financial resources; control measures to eliminate the production and use of intentionally produced POPs; the elimination of unintentionally produced POPs, where feasible, and management and disposal of POPs wastes in an environmentally sound manner; and substitution involving the use of safer chemicals and processes to prevent toxic by-products.

31. Since the adoption of the Convention, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee has continued to meet, under interim arrangements, to prepare for the first conference of the parties. At its sixth and seventh sessions, the Committee adopted decisions on: POPs review committee; expert group on the best available techniques (BAT) and the best environmental practices (BEP); clearing-house mechanism; national implementation plans (NIPs); technical assistance; centres for capacity-building and technology transfer; DDT; register of specific exemptions; exempted use; party reporting; effectiveness evaluation; non-compliance; tool kit for identification and quantification of dioxin and furan releases; interim financial arrangements, the budget and the financial mechanism. The first meeting of the conference of the parties is scheduled to be held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in April or May 2005.

4. Prior informed consent (Rotterdam Convention)

32. As a result of continuous collaboration that began in 1989 between FAO and UNEP on the principle of prior informed consent (PIC),[11] on 10 September 1998, the Conference of Plenipotentiaries, held in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, adopted the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade. The Convention, which was signed by 72 States and one regional economic integration organization, was to have entered into force 90 days after the submission of the fiftieth instrument of ratification. That condition was met on 26 November 2003, when Armenia ratified the Convention. Accordingly, the Convention entered into force on 24 February 2004.

33. The objective of the Convention is to promote shared responsibility and cooperative efforts among parties in the international trade of certain hazardous chemicals in order to protect human health and the environment from potential harm and to contribute to their environmentally sound use, by facilitating information exchange about their characteristics, providing for a national decision-making process on their import and export and disseminating these decisions to the parties. The Convention applies to banned or severely restricted chemicals or pesticides and

also includes severely hazardous pesticide formulations that are not otherwise banned or severely restricted according to the Convention. It originally covered 27 products,[12] including 17 pesticides, 5 severely hazardous pesticide formulations and 5 industrial chemicals.

34. In order to cover the period between the adoption of the instrument and its entry into force, the Rotterdam Conference decided to bring the original voluntary PIC procedure in line with the provisions of the Convention to enable, inter alia, a voluntary PIC procedure to continue to operate. This was called the interim PIC procedure. Under this new procedure, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee performed the functions of the Conference of the Parties. The Interim Chemical Review Committee was established by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee and UNEP and FAO were jointly designated as the secretariat for the Convention. The secretariat also ensured the operation of the interim PIC procedure.

35. As the subsidiary body of the interim PIC procedure, the Interim Chemical Review Committee considered draft decision guidance documents for new chemicals and made recommendations to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on the inclusion of new chemicals in the interim PIC procedure. A total of 37 chemicals are currently subject to the interim PIC procedure. Among these are 22 pesticides, 9 industrial chemicals and 6 severely hazardous pesticide formulations. At its fifth session, held in Geneva in February 2004, the Committee discussed five more chemicals, but did not recommend any for inclusion.

36. In its capacity as a governing body for the interim PIC procedure, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee addressed issues such as: review of methods of collection of information; recommendations of the Interim Chemical Review Committee, and its operational procedures; inclusion of new chemicals; adoption of decision guidance documents and preparation for the first Conference of the Parties. At its tenth session, held in Geneva in November 2003, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee decided to hold one more session to facilitate the process of transition from an interim to a legally binding procedure and to include new chemicals in the interim procedure in advance of the Conference of the Parties. The eleventh session of the Committee will be held in Geneva on 18 September 2004, while the first Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention is scheduled to be held in Geneva from 20 to 24 September 2004.

5. Strategic approach to international chemical management

37. The initiative of UNEP to develop a strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM)[13] — based on the Bahia Declaration on Chemical Safety and the priorities for action beyond 2000, adopted by IFCS — was endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation called for the completion of the SAICM process by 2005 in order to achieve effective management of risks throughout the chemicals' life cycle of production, use and disposal by 2020. The key feature of the process is its engagement of all sectors of society with an interest in chemical safety, including the environment, health, agriculture, labour, industry and development. The scope of SAICM remains to be determined by the stakeholders. A steering committee of IOMC (see paras. 21-22) members' organizations, IFCS, UNDP and the World Bank will oversee planning for the SAICM process.

38. In February 2003, the UNEP Governing Council endorsed the concept of an international conference, with preparatory meetings, as the basis for developing a SAICM through an open, transparent and inclusive process. Both the World Health Assembly, in May 2003, and the International Labour Conference, in June 2003, supported the SAICM process and called for full participation and contribution to its further development. IFCS, at its fourth session in November 2003, discussed the subsequent development of a SAICM and forwarded the outcome of its deliberations in the form of a report to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Development of a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.

39. The first meeting of the Preparatory Committee met in Bangkok from 9 to 13 November 2003. The Committee discussed potential issues to be addressed during the development of a SAICM, examined ways to structure the discussion and considered possible outcomes of the process. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Committee adopted its report, which contains a summary of discussions held during the session, an addendum containing issues to be addressed during the development of a SAICM and several annexes containing items to be forwarded to the second session of the Preparatory Committee and a proposal for intersessional activities. The second session of the Preparatory Committee is tentatively scheduled to be held from 4 to 8 October 2004.

B. Other developments

40. *Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals.* The ongoing work on the harmonization of classification and labelling of chemicals was brought under the auspices of the IOMC Coordinating Group for the Harmonization of Chemical Classification Systems, with OECD, ILO and the Subcommittee of the United Nations Committee of Experts on the Transportation of Dangerous Goods as active members. In 1999 the Economic and Social Council enlarged the mandate of the main Committee and created the new Subcommittee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS Subcommittee). After a decade of coordinated work, the Globally Harmonized System was adopted by the Subcommittee in December 2002 and endorsed by the Council in 2003 (resolution 2003/64). The System is now ready for worldwide implementation by countries and, as called for in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation is to be fully operational by 2008. The UNITAR/ILO/IOMC Globally Harmonized System capacity-building programme is developing partnership activities and providing support to assist countries in developing and implementing the Globally Harmonized System in order to achieve the 2008 target.

41. *Heavy metals — mercury and lead.* In its 2002 report, the Global Mercury Assessment Working Group states that approximately 70 per cent of new quantified man-made mercury emissions to the atmosphere are from coal-fired power stations and waste incinerators and calls upon Governments to consider a list of options for addressing the dangers of mercury. These include reducing risks by reducing or eliminating the production, use and release of mercury, substituting other non-mercury-based products and processes, launching talks for a legally binding treaty, establishing a non-binding global programme of action and strengthening cooperation among Governments on information-sharing, risk communication, assessment and related activities. The Working Group also recommends a number of "immediate actions", including public awareness programmes targeted at sensitive

populations, such as pregnant women, waste disposal facilities for the safe destruction of obsolete mercury-containing pesticides and pollution control technologies for power stations.

42. The UNEP Governing Council, at its twenty-second session, noted in its decision 22/4 V that there was sufficient evidence from global mercury assessment to warrant immediate national action to protect human health and the environment from the release of mercury and its compounds. Governments were invited to submit their views on the possible medium and long-term actions on mercury. These views will help to decide which option to choose for further action regarding mercury and other heavy metals at the next Governing Council session in 2005. Moreover, the Governing Council, in its decision on lead (22/4 III), encouraged the sound management of lead-containing wastes through the application of technical guidelines and the reduction of lead exposure. Governments were called upon to act in cooperation with the private sector on the phase-out of leaded gasoline and lead-based paint.

43. *Multilateral Environmental Agreements*. Since 1997, the Committee on Trade and Environment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been holding annual information sessions on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), where UNEP — which provides a secretariat to the Stockholm Convention and, jointly with FAO, to the Rotterdam Convention — and other MEA secretariats have made presentations on various trade-related aspects of their work, including technical assistance, capacity-building and information exchange. These sessions were intended to enhance understanding on various trade-related aspects, in particular, compliance mechanisms and dispute settlement provisions, in MEAs and WTO rules. Of approximately 200 MEAs, about 20, including the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, contain trade-related provisions. In 2001, the Doha Ministerial Declaration[14] mandated, among other measures, (i) negotiations on the relationship between existing WTO rules and specific trade obligations set out in MEAs, and (ii) procedures for regular information exchange between MEA secretariats and the relevant WTO Committees and the criteria for the granting of observer status. The importance of technical assistance and capacity-building areas recognized in the area of trade and environment and exchange of expertise and experience was encouraged on national environmental reviews.

44. The Committee on Trade and Environment, through its special sessions, is conducting negotiations on these issues. In a review prepared for the fifth WTO Ministerial Conference, held in Mexico in September 2003, it was reported that the Committee had made significant progress on certain aspects of the mandate, but further efforts would be required in several other areas. There was general agreement that existing forms of cooperation and an information exchange between WTO, UNEP and MEAs had proven to be valuable and should be enhanced. The Committee had invited some MEAs and UNEP, on an ad-hoc basis, to its two special sessions during 2003 and hope was expressed that that cooperation would continue.

IV. Future trends and emerging issues

45. The entry into force of the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions has raised hopes that they will contribute to the World Summit on Sustainable Development aim of ensuring that, by the year 2020, chemicals will be used and produced in ways

that minimize significant adverse effects on human health and the environment. In this regard, the successful conclusion of the SAICM process is essential to achieve the 2020 targets. At the same time they have raised concerns about the wide gap that exists between developed and developing countries in their ability to pursue chemical safety policies. Any effort to bridge the gap, in order to make meaningful further progress in any of the above-mentioned areas, will ultimately depend on the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building in the developing countries and mobilization of financial resources in support of national efforts.

46. The Rotterdam Convention has put an effective system in place for avoiding many of the dangerous practices of the past decades, when people were less aware of the dangers of toxic chemicals. The Convention offers member Governments, particularly in developing countries, the tools they need to protect their citizens and strengthen their chemical management. They can now decide which potentially hazardous chemicals they want to import and which to exclude because they cannot manage them safely.

47. The Stockholm Convention, apart from banning the use of POPs, also focuses on cleaning up the growing accumulation of unwanted and obsolete stockpiles of pesticides and toxic chemicals. This instrument is different in that, when Governments adopted the Convention, the Global Environmental Facility[15] was named as its financial mechanism. It has mobilized resources to support POPs projects in more than 100 countries in a short period of time. Backed by an alliance of developed and developing countries, which also includes industry and environmental groups, the Stockholm Convention holds the promise of a POPs-free world for future generations.

48. Both coordination mechanisms, IFCS and IOMC continue to realize important work on issues related to the sound management of hazardous chemicals and have been instrumental in helping to identify priorities for action by Governments and international organizations. They have contributed to the improved access to information, awareness of international activities and increased cooperation and coordination in the area of chemical safety. IFCS retains its unique position as an overarching and flexible mechanism initiating and responding to innovative policy proposals that could be placed on the agenda of the IOMC governing bodies, which has both the financial and technical resources necessary to take real action on the issues.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

49. Since the previous triennial review by ECOSOC in 2001, there has been significant progress, particularly the coming into force, early this year, of the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. The Conventions have put in place an effective system to deal with certain hazardous chemical products — an issue underlying the need to publish the Consolidated List — but the coverage of both Conventions, though legally binding, is still very limited in the number of products covered. In accordance with the spirit of General Assembly resolution 37/137, the List would continue to include data previously collected by the United Nations system organizations for dissemination until most of the products in the List are reviewed for inclusion by the Conventions.

Recommendation 1

50. **The Economic and Social Council may wish to consider online availability of the Consolidated List on a permanent basis, while printing only the updates in all the official languages of the United Nations, alternating between chemicals and pharmaceuticals every year.**

51. Recent positive developments in the environmentally sound management of hazardous chemicals — the coming into force of the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the adoption of the Globally Harmonized System, the WTO negotiations on cooperation with the MEA secretariats and UNEP and the launching of SAICM — all point to the overwhelming need for technical assistance and capacity-building in order for developing countries not only to take advantage of existing international mechanisms, but also to make further progress in this area. The expansion of capacity-building activities would be contingent upon the availability of substantial new financial resources to support national-level activities in the management of products harmful to health and the environment.

Recommendation 2

52. **The Council may wish to recommend to multilateral and bilateral agencies to continue to strengthen capacity-building and technical assistance activities in developing countries and urge the donor agencies to provide additional financial resources in support of national efforts to improve the environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals.**

53. There are thousands of chemicals available on the market and hundreds more are added each year, which poses a huge challenge for Governments, especially in developing countries, to monitor and manage these potentially dangerous substances, which are otherwise essential in the everyday lives of their citizens. To date, a piecemeal approach has been employed in dealing with the management of hazardous products, but the evidence is piling up for a life-cycle management approach, which is to achieve an effective management of risks throughout the life cycle of a chemical, i.e., from production and use to the disposal of waste. Therefore, the successful completion of the SAICM process is essential in order to achieve the 2020 targets endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Recommendation 3

54. **The Council may wish to recommend to Member States to participate fully in the process to develop SAICM to its successful conclusion by 2005 in order to achieve the 2020 target on the use and production of chemicals in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.**

Notes

[1] See A/41/329-E/1986/83, A/44/276-E/1989/78, A/47/222-E/1992/57, A/50/182 and Corr.1-E/1995/66 and Corr.1, A/53/156-E/1998/78 and A/56/115-E/2001/92.

[2] See www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/standard.htm#cr_specrisk.

[3] See www.codexalimentarius.net.

[4] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

[5] See www.who.int/pcs.

[6] See www.johannesburgsummit.org.

[7] For further information, see www.who.int/iomc.

[8] See www.who.int/ifcs.

[9] See www.chem.unep.ch/pops.

[10] Nine pesticides: aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, mirex and toxaphene; two industrial chemicals: hexachlorobenzene (HCB) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs); and two unintended by-products: dioxins and furans.

[11] See www.pic.int.

[12] They are 17 pesticides (2,4,5-T, aldrin, captafol, chlordane, chlordimeform, chlorobenzilate, DDT, dieldrin, dinoseb and dinoseb salts, EDB (1,2-dibromoethane), fluoroacetamide, HCH (mixed isomers), heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene, lindane (gamma-HCH), mercury compounds and pentachlorophenol), 5 severely hazardous pesticide formulations (methamidophos, methyl-parathion monocrotophos, parathions and phosphamidon) and 5 industrial chemicals (crocidolite, PBBs, PCBs, PCTs and Tris (2,3-dibromopropyl) phosphate), which were originally included in the Convention in September 1998. The 4 additional chemicals included since then are binapacryl, ethylene dichloride, ethylene oxide and toxaphene.

[13] See www.chem.unep.ch/saicm.

[14] See http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min01_e/mindecl_e.htm.

[15] See http://www.gefweb.org.